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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

INFORMATION REPORT

50X1-HUM

COUNTRY USSR

REPORT

SUBJECT Problem of Frostbite in the Soviet Army/Physical
Standards/Rates of Deferrment

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1. The Soviet Army was initially plagued by frostbite during the war with Finland. The winter of 1939 was particularly severe and frostbite casualties were extremely high. Entire companies had to be evacuated because of the severity of frostbite on fingers and toes. There were no preventative measures taken until the casualty rate became so alarming that the Soviet Military Command became concerned. The only prophylaxis used was special boots, gloves and caps lined with felt material. Other preventative measures were also recommended which are well known to the medical departments of the US Army. These include frequent changes of socks, intermittent movement of the toes and fingers to stimulate circulation and, most important, keeping the feet dry. [redacted] the large quantity of alcohol given each Soviet soldier prior to [redacted]

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his entering battle should have been eliminated. The military authorities, however, would not agree to this, because they considered alcohol necessary to stimulate the soldier for battle. Many of the soldiers, shortly after consuming one-half to one pint of alcohol were seriously wounded and became exposed to extreme cold weather and snow before they were hospitalized. The alcohol had a deleterious effect on the body tissues and caused a breakdown of the circulatory system. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] Mass amputations resulted from the frostbite incurred during the winter of 1939. Soviet medical authorities recommended the use of fish or naphthalan oil bandages where frostbite was not so severe as to require amputation. These oil bandages eliminated the further penetration of the tissue breakdown process, and [REDACTED] were used primarily on the feet. Use was also made of the periarterial sympathectomy; however this was not used widely because of the limited knowledge of what aftereffects might accompany this type of surgery. [REDACTED]

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2. There were very few physical standards of the Soviet Army which precluded the induction of an individual during World War II. Manpower was critical and only the tuberculars, lepers, blind, epileptics, deaf and incurable syphilitics were deferred. Pre-war standards for induction were completely forgotten. Defense Order No 336 which outlined physical standards for induction, and was signed by the Minister of Defense in 1942, was disregarded almost in its entirety. Individuals with defective eyesight and hearing were placed in sedentary type work. Those who had curable syphilis were placed in military hospitals and after treatment were released for military duty. Diseases, such as rupture or hernia inguinalis, precluded an individual from front line duty; however, such individuals were required to serve in a rear echelon. Illness, such as duodenal ulcer and gastritis, were classified in a similar manner. All selections for induction of individuals into the army were performed by the local district military commissariasts. The order for drafting was signed by the local military commissar. The physicians who were required to perform the examinations were delegated from the local civilian hospitals.

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